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SERVING PASCO COUNTY FOR FIFTY YEARS

By CARL ORTH | The Suncoast News

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NEW PORT RICHEY - Since much of Pasco County falls within a 50-mile zone of a nuclear power plant, Pasco officials have been reviewing nuclear emergency plans this week.

The continuing battle to gain control of the tsunami-damaged Fukushima nuclear power complex in Japan has prompted the review of all nuclear plants in the U.S. Florida has four nuclear facilities, including the Progress Energy Florida plant in Crystal River.

Much of the advice given to West Pasco residents about hurricane preparations would also apply to any radiation fallout emergency, according to Pasco County Emergency Management Director James Martin. Residents should stockpile essential items in a disaster kit, he strongly recommended.

One difference concerns any distribution of potassium iodide tablets to residents within a radiation fallout zone. The pills help protect against the thyroid cancer risk associated with the radioactive iodine molecules that can be released during nuclear plant emergencies. Martin, however, said state and federal public officials are more qualified to answer that question than he would be.

On Wednesday, two members of the U.S. House from Florida sent a letter to a federal agency about stockpiling potassium iodide in addition to fallout evacuation plans. Rep. C.W. "Bill" Young, R-Indian Shores, and Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Palm Harbor, addressed their letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. ([Continue Reading Here](#))